



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT February 9, 2009

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#### **House Bill 6313 - An Act Concerning Raw Milk**

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#### **The Department of Public Health supports House Bill 6313.**

This act amends the current statute in several ways that will help minimize the risk of disease transmission from raw milk to people. The prevention measures include three important components. They are improved monitoring for human pathogens on the farm, consumer education regarding the dangers of consuming raw milk, and limiting retail sale to the premises where the milk is produced.

Raw milk accounts for less than 1% of milk consumed in the United States but is responsible for over 90% of disease outbreaks where milk is implicated as the source. One example is an outbreak that occurred during 2008 in Connecticut. An investigation conducted by the departments of Public Health and Agriculture identified 7 persons with confirmed bacterial infections of *Escherichia coli* that originated from a cow on a Connecticut farm. The infected persons included 4 children who were hospitalized for serious manifestations of the disease; three children required dialysis.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has clearly stated that raw milk has no health benefit that justifies the increased risk of disease that consumption of raw milk presents. The Academy endorses the pasteurization of all milk and milk products for children. The American Medical Association and the American Veterinary Medical Association have published similar opinions.

Interstate shipping of raw milk has been banned since 1987. It was the result of a court order requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to mitigate the health risks associated with sale of raw milk. The Food and Drug Administration, stating that raw milk cannot be considered safe despite producers' best efforts, published regulations requiring the pasteurization of all milk and milk products intended for human consumption.

Currently, the majority of states either prohibit entirely or limit the retail sale of raw milk for human consumption. If retail sales are to continue to be permitted in Connecticut, the proposed legislation should be adopted.

The proposed labeling requirement that raw milk be labeled with a warning statement provides an imperfect but necessary public health intervention by informing the consumer that the unpasteurized milk may contain harmful bacteria and that certain described classes of high-risk individuals are at the highest risk of serious illness from use of the raw milk. The public health effectiveness of the warning labeling would be enhanced by the inclusion of an advisory statement recommending that high-risk groups not consume raw milk. The warning statements should be required to be printed on each container of raw milk without exception and not rely on removable hang tags as described in the proposed legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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